

Stafford County Public Schools (SCPS)  
Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee  
Minutes from Meeting #2, May 10, 2006, 6:30-8:00 p.m.  
SCPS Professional Development Center, Room 14

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**Attendance**

Hilda Ast, Rhea Boudaoud, Mike Campbell, Maureen Carden, Carmen Cata, Andrea Coble, Christy Crocker, Brooke Fowler, Donna Garcia, Christine Grady, Charlie Hamm, Patricia Healy (School Board Liaison), David Hooten, Marty Hudson, Deb Johnson, Maggie Jones, Nanette Kidby (School Board Liaison), Anne Kline, Benjamin Leitner, Alan McCall, Bobbie McElfish, Dan Monsivais, Cheryl O'Connor (SCPS Facilitator), Mary Repass, Doug Schuch (SCPS Facilitator), Marguerite Shiffler, Heidi Sloan, Wendy Snider, Elizabeth Staskiel, Cathy Van Valzah, and Ann Walker

**Discussion Items**

1. Welcome and Introduction of SCPS Staff and School Board Liaison
2. Introduction Activity
3. Purpose/Tasking of this Committee – The purpose and tasking of the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee were explained, as requested by several members of the committee. The Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee is classified as an “ad hoc committee” commissioned by the SCPS School Board. As an SCPS ad hoc committee, all meeting schedules will be posted and advertised to the general public, and anyone may attend these meetings. Any non-committee members who elect to attend committee meetings are only permitted to observe unless the committee expressly invites or encourages public input/participation at a specific meeting. Once approved, committee meeting minutes are posted and made available to the public.

The purpose of the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee is to evaluate the hybrid block schedule that three SCPS high schools have adopted and implemented, starting during the 2005-06 school year. The evaluation should attempt to include data that was listed in the evaluation guideline approved by the School Board, but may also include other data that the committee feels may indicate effective school performance. Based on conversations, emails, and index cards that the facilitators have received, there appears to be some confusion about the committee’s purpose and/or function. First, the purpose of the committee is not to evaluate Colonial Forge High School and Stafford High School, yet the committee will be collecting and analyzing data from these two schools per the evaluation guidelines approved by the SCPS School Board. Second, the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee is not an oversight committee and has been given no authority to decide the fate of block

scheduling at any of the schools in SCPS. However, it is possible that those who may be involved in making future decision about high school scheduling models in SCPS will use information from this evaluation as a factor in making potential decisions.

Third, the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee is not evaluating the decision for three high schools in SCPS to adopt a hybrid block schedule. Instead, the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee is trying to assess the effectiveness of the hybrid block schedule. Fourth, the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee is not conducting a research study and attempting to assess the general effectiveness of block scheduling. Instead, the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee is trying to assess the effectiveness of the hybrid block schedule in the three SCPS high schools that implemented it starting in 2005-06. Therefore, the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee will focus its time, effort, and energy on evaluating the effectiveness of the hybrid block schedule at BPHS, MVHS, and NSHS.

4. History of Block Scheduling in SCPS – The history of block scheduling in SCPS was provided so that committee members had some information about the background of block scheduling in SCPS. Most of this information is also available in the documents at the following SCPS website:

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/Div/Stafford/BlockSchedule/blockschedule1.html>

In Fall 1994, an SCPS committee was formed to investigate alternate scheduling. This committee prepared a report with specific recommendations about restructuring secondary school schedules based on research and visits to school districts operating non-traditional schedules. This committee recommended transitioning SCPS to a semester block schedule with a modification including embedded 45-minute periods for courses that require year-long schedules. However, based on surveys done at that time, not enough teachers supported the change, and the recommendations were not followed. Then in Spring 2003, NSHS formed groups to discuss block scheduling and made some site visits to several schools operating non-traditional schedules. In November 2004, the SCPS School Board approved the use of block scheduling for MVHS. In December 2004, BPHS requested approval for block scheduling, and the SCPS School Board approved BPHS to implement block scheduling in January 2005, while also establishing guidelines for other SCPS high schools who wanted to transition to alternative scheduling. The SCPS School Board also requested that all schools utilize the same alternative schedule. Finally, in the spring of 2005, NSHS sought permission and was approved to implement a block schedule.

5. Additional Committee Meeting Norms – Committee groups discussed several norms that were previously proposed by committee members. Groups agreed that the specific goal of each committee meeting should be clearly stated, but several groups felt that the agendas met this requirement. Groups agreed that having handouts for upcoming meetings emailed prior to the actual meeting would enhance the efficiency of the meetings. Groups did not have consensus on whether meeting agendas should be approved by the School Board Liaison prior to each committee meeting. Groups generally agreed that a 15 minute “open forum” discussion at each meeting would be

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beneficial, but groups had different ideas about how that should be accomplished. Groups agreed that the open forum should be held before or after the normal meeting time, and most groups felt that it should be in a structured and controlled setting. Some groups felt that individuals who wish to speak should be given a time limit.

6. Data Requests – Committee groups spent time looking over a list of data requests generated from committee member requests made through emails and index card comments at a previous meeting. Groups recorded whether they felt each data set would be practical, valid, and directly support the purpose of the Block Scheduling Evaluation Committee. Committee members can provide additional feedback regarding the data requests via email.
7. Consideration of Utilizing an External Facilitator for this Committee (Facilitated by Nanette Kidby, School Board Liaison) – The groups discussed the possibility of using an external facilitator to work with the committee. Group written input was submitted via index cards and is included below. Generally, there was no consensus about using an external facilitator.
  - a) “We think that at this time the current facilitators are adequate. Since we are early in the process this opinion may change as we proceed. We would like the right to revisit this later if necessary.”
  - b) • 1 very strongly wants a “civilian” facilitator  
• 4 are agreeable to Dr. Schuch facilitating
  - c) “We do not feel that any outside facilitator is necessary!”
  - d) • No consensus regarding separate/independent facilitator  
• 2 members missing
  - e) “[This] group agrees that an outside facilitator is a good idea.”
    - i.e. the Abeline Paradox – we do not want to get on the bus
    - Suggest we/School Board co-share volunteers from adjacent county – the school boards could agree that when they have a similar project – Stafford County could provide objective volunteers
  - f) No consensus

**Deferred Item**

8. Investigation of Advanced Placement Course Enrollment Data  
*Deferred to 9/20/06.*

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### **Homework Item**

9. Distribution of Sample Surveys/Homework Assignment

The committee was reminded that the approved evaluation plan includes surveys of teachers, parents, and students. Groups were assigned a particular survey constituency (teacher, parent, or student) at the 4/5/06 meeting. Committee members were tasked with reviewing sample survey items and providing feedback on whether to accept, delete, modify, or add to these survey items. Copies of sample surveys were provided to all committee members.

### **Next Meeting**

10. Wednesday, August 23, 6:30-8:00 p.m., SCPS PDC Room 14